The Virtual Reality Solution in Brain and Mental Health Transcript

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Introduction to Thrive 360

You know, the world of virtual reality and augmented reality that's really taking, the world by storm. And I think from a health perspective, we're lacking a little behind.

But I want to talk to someone who's right in the weeds when it comes to delivering health and mental health information with VR and AR. So really proud to introduce, Mr.

Joe Bosco. He's a serial entrepreneur whose current venture is transforming mental emotional well-being. And, he is, his current company called thrive 360 is sort of the vision.

It has the vision of increasing the, efficacy and availability of mental health resources on demand by leveraging technology using augmented reality and virtual reality.

So the digital platform uses, practices and professionals and, and techniques and tools and to put into this innovative, kind of pack edge. From a technology standpoint, to be delivered to the world.

So, so proud to introduce Mister Joe Wasco. Joe, welcome to the summit. I'm so happy you agreed to talk with me. Appreciate you coming on. Thanks. I appreciate you, in extending the invitation to me.

It's a it's a privilege solutely. So let's dive in. So, what are the current trends that you're seeing in terms of, like, a disparity in, like, supply and demand when it comes to, like, mental health, mental health services right now?

That's a that's a good question. I mean, right now, I mean, it's pretty obvious that America and places around the world are what I would call on tilt.

Mental Health Access Challenges

I mean, today, you know, Americans are experiencing stress at about at least once a week. A high level of stress about 84% of the time, which is, is, the warming rate, right now, three out of four, roughly, employers feel like they're burning out at their job.

1 in 5, adults right now or, dealing with, and experiencing a real mental illness each year as well. You know, back to the, you know, in that, those statistics right there are pretty alarming and that doesn't really take into account the children that are growing up in this technology driven world. And.

Right, you know what presses all these buttons is doing everybody and, and you know, much better than me, but, it's a new world. It is. But not only is there the I think there's friction points in people.

One, recognizing that there's actually, mental, spiritual and brain health issues and too, there's a fear of reaching out for help, as well, because, like, someone in my profession, I've been a physician, for example.

Right. That's you. Once you have a mental health practitioner on board, you're like, you know, a lot of a lot of what we do professionally make may be in jeopardy, or there's sort of this thought process.

Right. And there's a lot of people who just have, this idea that, you know, having these issues is a sign of weakness or anything like that, which is not the case.

But there's, there's a big leap between like, recognition of the issues and then actually, you know, seeking out health and then, I don't know, how is the rest of the country, like, right now, even in Houston, I want to send my patient to, psychologist or licensed social worker for mental health issues.

There's there's multi-week and multi-month waiting lists now, because of what's going on. Right? I mean, right now what, what the research is, is saying and, is that for every, for every 100,000 people, or 30 licensed therapist out of a 30 licensed therapist, about 46% percent of them are burned out.

And, you know, if you go into the rural areas, it's it's it's, it's much worse than that. I mean, having said that, you know, on average, it's going to cost somewhere between 65 and $250 per appointment, and you're going to have to go around 15 or 20 sessions to make a measurable improvement.

And so that journey, that just the journey itself, can be filled with stress, anxiety for a lot of people, especially where they've already got stress and anxiety or something they're dealing with and just, I mean, the whole just the whole time these days, right now are so long.

And when you're holding, you know, and then you have to go, you know, get the car and you thought about it, the day before, it can it just adds up. And so, Oh, yeah. Yeah.

And some people, are even disabled and, they can't physically go anywhere or the rely on public transportation. And that can create a massive barrier as well.

Right. And so, you know, saving time and money. Right. Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. And so we're maintaining that because these are barriers. So how did some of these barriers really allow you to shape the platform that you you developed in thrive through 60.

Well, I mean for me, you know, as a solid who's lived 60 plus years, I've seen, you know, just and I haven't personally experienced, but, you know, you see the trend and for a long time I've noticed, for example, of me, there's.

Oh, we've always heard the reports about the Veterans Administration not being able to support the rights, whether it be mental health, getting in for for a medical appointment, whatever the case is, it's been a struggle.

And, and then you think of the general population, and, and and for the people that really are just average Joes, so to speak, who, you know, who are faced maybe with living paycheck to paycheck, which represents, you know, 200 million people or more in our country right now.

How VR Inspired the Platform

So to take off time, you know, and, and, and commit to, you know, what's ailing you in an attempt to fix it, get support, and then and then hoping that you actually resonate with the person that you've identified, that is going to take you, on average, 25 to 90 days.

And that's really if you've got some connections almost, or the money. Right. In the in the case of children, it's taken up to a year to year to get a specialist that can really speak to, well, in ways that resonate.

So it's just a big problem. And, and the idea that, the that I have, you know, 6 or 7 years ago was, you know, what, you know, it was really when I took my first virtual reality test drive.

Yeah. And, I thought about, you know, one of your other speakers, Tony Robbins, and what I learned 30 years ago, 25 years ago, with regard to that, some more of the techniques that he had written a book about neuro linguistic programing.

It's very visual. You're getting all your senses. And when I was in this headset, I was thinking, well, one of the issues with that is that 40% of the people, if you were to if I was to say to you, close your eyes, imagine yourself on a beach, you're overlooking the ocean.

You see a rainbow colored sailboat. 40% of the people won't be able to either see it or that it'll be a block of water. Still pictures. The sound might be muffled of the wind or the ocean waves and so the idea in in neuro linguistic

programing, at least in that one modality, is to to get someone relaxed and in a quiet mind.

So the, so that there may be open to seeing and, and and reshaping some of their thoughts and their it's called reframing their, the way they see things and, and hear things for example.

And it it's similar and this is not in doctor terms but to exposure therapy where, you know, you might take somebody back to if it was a relationship, you take them back to where, you know, they're having these problems or fights or whatever kind of anxious they're dealing with.

And then, having experienced it and, and, and get them in full state and then have them reframe it, maybe before they were in that relationship or having seen themselves see themselves in a different way going forward.

And it brings a lot of relief to a lot of people. And that's just one idea. But that was the moment for me. You know, I was wondering if I put someone in a headset, put them on the beach and they see the rainbow colored sailboat up and, you know, as they're looking over the ocean with that efficacy increase.

And, and that was really what I set out to prove first to myself and then, go forward with some clinical trials and things of that nature to help support.

And it really did, and in some cases, help people visualize better. In some cases, they don't need to visualize if you're in VR. So, it, it just that was kind of the moment it started.

But the, the mission really was to bring technology and an ecosystem of doctors and therapists that specialize in certain areas that a lot of people are suffering.

And, and when you've got, you know, one therapy, or 30 therapists, 10 or 15 or whatever, 100,000 people, it's hard to get to see. So how can we use technology to recreate that and office experience, in these different areas where people are suffering or ailing or or they're looking for coping skills or, or management skills of what's what's what's bothering them.

We all suffer from stress. We just don't all have the skill set, to manage it. It's it's a reality of, of where we are and who we are. So, the idea was to to create an ecosystem of doctors and therapists and then, marry that, with a marketplace, where people could, could go know in a trusted fashion and seek out different modalities that doctors and therapists are going to be prescribing as if you were going to see them in person.

Create the common threads as we produce it, that most people are dealing with, with whatever's ailing them. Some people, lose a loved one, sort of, you know, I'm, I never even really knew prior to really getting into the the mission that that there's there's therapists and doctors that can help people deal with the trauma of losing a loved one, where most people just suffer and have heard the old cliche that time will heal that word.

But there is ways to get through it quicker, especially if you go and can identify somebody who really understands how to help you do that. And, and, you know, so whether it's that or stress or anxiety or, or, having a baby or dealing with your children or relationships, you know, there's really I mean, the American doctors are checked off and, and their therapists are the best in the world.

So if we can recreate that, you know, office experience and enhance it with the technology and then drive it to, you know, anybody that's got a cell phone and make it affordable, then that was our mission and that's what we've done.

Well it's amazing. So, so, so I guess the platform will have, a recording of the top people in the industry. Right.

Anonymous, On-Demand Support

And then, then that means that, the, the people who are seeking out the help can actually curate their own journey and with on demand access right there and then.

Right. And then, and when they're able to have the on demand access. So, that means that there's convenience, right? It's cost effective. They can do it from the privacy of their own home or wherever they are.

Right? You know, and then, and also, you can start, like, kind of shopping around, see who you who you, respond to as well, right? Oh, it's so most possible don't get the opportunity to do that within, within the, real life, but from a VR platform, I think it's, it's it's a big game changer when we think about it.

So I guess what you're trying to do is you're not trying to replace, like, a therapists or the social workers or the psychologist, right? You're trying to, bridge that gap so people can have that step in.

And of course, they should they choose to go ahead with, the therapist or whatever, or maybe be on a giant waiting list. There's at least some progress can be made in the beginning, correct? Yes.

I mean, you mentioned stigma earlier. Yeah. So right now, six out of ten people, don't go to seek help because of stigma, which is really the shame and embarrassment of whatever they're dealing with.

It could be something as simple as I told my wife and my kids I was quitting smoking, and then I found myself out, you know, in the driveway, sneaking a cigaret.

And it's just the shame of it all. And in many cases, it's it's it's it's much deeper, issues for some people with regard to relationship issues or, stress that's, that's risen to a level of anxiety and, and that can be a very wicked place to, to have to, find yourself until you've been there is it?

It is. It's just it's unbelievable. Really. And so the I did really was to, you know, create these, recreate the in office experience, not to replace anybody.

The idea is really to, to take the stigma and, and start to destigmatize it because it whether people go take the traditional journey of seeing somebody, and getting support that way, that's a, that's generally going to get them a good result.

For the people that may have more restrictions. What we did was we started and spent a lot of time on the research. Of the six out of ten people who never even go, it's this untapped market that you don't hear about.

So, and when we started that market, you know, obviously time, money, everybody can relate to that. But the shame and embarrassment, and there's a lot more that goes into the shame and embarrassment with regard to really getting into what that looks like, it sounds like.

But the but the bottom line is, is we engineered a platform that's anonymous, confidential, unlike a lot of, the AP programs that at work, at work, they're designed with a, a finite algorithm of people that are going to be using it.

And so engagement levels are generally south of 3 or 4%. Because they don't they've got trust issues. I mean, right, right. You got trust issues. Just going to see a therapist or doctor.

They don't want to answer a litany of questions they don't want to bury. So, to show them that they don't know or they're, they're not comfortable with, so that when you really get into the research there, there's a lot of issues that are stopping people from even getting help that they can benefit.

And so we engineered our platform around the barriers, really, for the six out of ten who who were absolutely close to suggesting and then, just offered them a different, user journey.

Versus a traditional one. But having said that, if they resonate with our therapists and doctors or anybody else, we would encourage them to take that path.

Because like I said earlier, we got the best doctors are the, in America. So why would we, do our best to share, that technology and their expertise. Right.

And so this, having that sort of platform where there's, well, I can go on there anonymously and access that, there doesn't necessarily have to be a stigma there.

And even though there is, it doesn't matter because I'm going in there into a space. I'm kind of exploring it. So I think that's I think what you're doing is absolutely, fabulous.

And so, you know, what are there is there anyone else trying to accomplish what you've accomplished and other research being done in VR and, and other immersive technologies right now?

I mean, there's a lot of great research being done. All over the world. And, in VR especially, I mean, there's a lot of research with regard to suicide prevention, PTSD, exposure therapy all around the world, along with within our country, robotics and and things of that nature.

And, you know, there's a lot of good digital self care, apps that have have exploded, you know, especially since the pandemic, there's, there's nobody really doing what we're doing, but we're doing a lot of what they're doing from different quarters.

VR Research and Competitive Landscape

And most of them. So, are, you know, there's a lot of medical applications in VR, but VR, unless you're in a gaming environment, still, you know, the adoption is growing, and and meta just came out with their new headset two days ago, and it's it's finally getting there to where you got something sleek, like, much lighter weight than their previous one, which is 40% lighter, you know, eventually in the not too distant future, it's going to be like putting on a pair of sunglasses.

And it's it's very magical technology. When you're when you can get in it, it's not as clunky as it is today. You know, with so much technology that depleting people's mental health.

I'm glad we have something. That's going to be helping. I think that that war, is, is very lopsided, like I said, earlier. But I think, I think what you develop is, is, is wonderful.

And so think about the children and the young people that are in the gaming environment, isolated all day long. You know, you, you on online like I was talking about.

So what I was talking about is I have I have young children myself and so this is immersive environment right now in 3D environments like, you know, like Minecraft and Roblox and stuff like that.

Right. Is that there's, there's a lot, a lot of the engineering behind the game is to keep them ins, keep them sort of engaged in the actual game process, but from a from a brain perspective, it's actually creating a lot of sleep disturbances, circadian imbalances.

It's creating a lot of this hyper dopamine, hyper vigilant state. It's fueling the A. D. D.. Right. And so, so, so that technology right now has been creating a lot of detriment in children, but in adults is also worsening circadian this function, brain fog, memory loss, fatigue, mood disorders, mood swings and stuff like that, and aggressiveness, emotionality, you name it.

And in fact, you know, we do brain maps, my facility here at Texas for life somewhere else. And I can actually see someone's brain being hyper triggered, chronically over time.

And sometimes I'm like, well, what do you do for a living? Well, I'm a programmer also. Okay, let's talk about the stimulation of that light over time.

In your eyes, which could be have a detrimental effect. But let's talk about also like creating the peacefulness, right. And mindfulness starts within you creating that that sense of balance.

And this is where like coaching this is where mind body medicine, this is where psychology really can can come in and create that, that balance. But I think that from from a VR standpoint that the, the, the the easier the easier we can get people to enter this platform and say, hey, you know what?

Here's something that you might want to consider, right? And not necessarily push them all the way into like a psychiatry office or, or, or counselor's office and stuff like that.

I think that's huge, especially in the pandemic era. A lot of that now, a lot of people are working from home. Right. And so we're in this new cultural environment where there's where people don't necessarily want to leave unless they really have to as well, almost becomes an annoyance, you know, at this point.

And yes, let me ask you this. Have you seen just basic social skills and anxiety from people that have been isolated now having to reenter the workplace?

I, we heard a lot of stories about, it's, you know, a lot of people don't want to go back there socially. They're, they're experiencing a lot of anxiety just in the thought of having to, you know, get out in public nowadays and, and, and socialize.

I think there's, there's two ways to look at that. One. Yes. People are isolated, not necessarily want to go back into people start realizing that the workplace is triggering, as well.

Right. And that, they may feel that higher sense of safety, comfort when they're at home. And then what? Maybe there's a third aspect is that there's more jobs that are available to work virtually from home because of all the systems that we've built in the last two years.

Do so including my own company. Right. And so, we're well, here's the thing. The there's nothing wrong with working from home, but the more someone's isolated, the the more that a lot of the, the mental health issues can to kind of progress on.

And that's usually because of the isolation. But also they're not necessarily getting their steps in. Right. They're not getting the vitamin D that's necessary to form exposure.

Mental Health, Gaming, and Isolation

You know, they're not engaging their, their muscles, their, their the, the eating habits actually can change a lot when I'm availability is very different as well.

So it becomes kind of this metabolic nightmare, as well. Right. But one of the ways that we, we, we, we battle with that is to not necessarily, hey, eat less and move more now it's like create the mindfulness around it.

Like create that balance within your life. And, and and we we really rely on our mental health professionals to to do that because that starts first in the behavioral change process.

But that, that's, that's the way I kind of, I kind of look at it that makes sense. And, you know, to take what you just said and, and engineer around what you just said.

For us, that looks like as simple is, if if people are isolated and this is what they go to, then we want everyone to do this and keep it very seamless, that they can get their solutions and their comfort and so hope and, and and, and understanding of how to manage what's Erin.

There right here on the phone. And that's, that's where we start. That's how we engineer. That's what we engineer around was exactly what you're just talking about.

And. Right. And there's nothing new about that. Right. Because there's other people's, you know, for example, headspace app headspace. I mean, that one, the pandemic is because people realizing that there's a need to

create sort of that mindfulness that's there.

Right. So meditation app. Right. There's there's insight timing, which is another one. So we're seeing these like self engineered apps, self-help apps if you will.

That's that's, that's really thriving and doing pretty well. So I think that, you know, the right now, what you guys are doing is taking even much further beyond that and actually include the healthcare professionals on the platform.

And that I think that's absolutely amazing is because there's not a one size fits all approach to every person's ailments. Right. And so, but but if the, the it's all about the hero's journey.

We want to make the people the, the actual hero and they can start choosing their guides right within the platform. And that's what's going to be creating the the best outcome for this.

So I think it's absolutely brilliant. So so where do you, what do you like, where do you go from here? What do you think the next five years kind of look like?

Where do you think it should look like in terms of like, VR and mobile help? Mobile apps and mental health? Well, I hope, I mean, the metaverse and VR is, is a very exciting space because, there, you know, I mean, when we when I think of what that could do for someone who's in in Narcotics Anonymous or Alcoholics Anonymous, who may even live in a city or may live in, in a rural area, and maybe the weather's bad, it's cold, and they or their car breaks down, you know, that will provide them an opportunity to go to a virtual meeting that can continue with anonymity, potentially as an avatar.

Or they don't have to be anonymous. They have a choice of how to whatever kind of cover they they feel like they need. But at the same time, the goal is get to the meeting, you know, get to the meeting.

If if that's what, you're suffering from or if that's the, the, the, the what your coping skill is, is to participate. And I'm not suggesting that going in person is not as good or vice versa.

I'm just saying it's just another alternative that for some people who don't want to get out anymore, it may be easier, at least to get there. And, you know, through the through the magic of technology.

Oh, absolutely. I think it's once again, I think it's a game changer. But I also think it's that, you know, some people who kind of view the metaverse as something that's like evil or something gives us something that's there and we shouldn't go there.

Well, you know, unfortunately or fortunately, that's where that's where we're going. And it's not like you can stop it. Right. And so, so to, to meet to meet people where they're at, you need a platform to come back destruction that other platforms can create, especially in like the gaming world and stuff like that.

And, and the social media and stuff like that as well. Right. And and meeting people where they are, which is, you know, AR, VR or just, just on their phone at home, right, meeting people where they are is, is absolutely needed.

In fact, you know, that's where medicine's going. You know, the practice of medicine hasn't really changed, ever. And, technology has changed a lot in the last 70 years, since a lot of the medicine hasn't necessarily evolved, to meet where people where they are.

Future of VR in Healthcare

And medicine really needs to, and I think that the delivery of this type of, information to technology is, is absolutely crucial. You know, I, I think and I do see one one day that, you know, we're able to kind of all come together and say that, hey, maybe a platform like drive 260 was the first to do it.

Right. And then we can kind of model off of after this concept and say, hey, this is where the standard of care

should be. I think it could be a standard of care in the near future.

Well, hopefully it's built on I mean, I'm guilty like everyone else, of loving my iPhone and loving my watch, but every time, the front door opens, my watch goes off, and, I'm being buzzed, and I can't imagine that it's probably healthy for me, but I want to get rid of my my toys, you know?

So, I'm hoping that, like you said, that, you know, I mean, in, in the sense of the iWatch, for example, there's some great technology coming out with health that that there can titers, you know, if your blood pressure goes up, if your heart's racing all of a sudden, you know, without even knowing it, you're going to get a notification and it can really serve you in a, in a, in a just a great way.

My own mother has, not irregular heartbeat, but, what is it called? When it just starts beating fast? Yeah. So it's, it's arrhythmias. Arrhythmias. Yeah. Yeah.

And but her watch will notify her and. Yeah. And she can take action on it. So it's it is the reality of our world. I don't think we can change it. So hopefully we can find a way to use that reality to, to help people support, what's happening bill.

But there is some very cool futuristic stuff coming out in the health cyber of what we're seeing. But I can also understand that people that that, consider it to be evil.

Because it's, it it's it's, you know, a lot of children are addicted to it. And a lot of adults are too crazy. Right. But once again, that's we have to meet society where it's going.

Right? It's not necessarily, you know, completely get rid of it. And these are lifestyle choices that we can we can certainly make. But, you know, fighting the good fight, you know, takes, takes us to, to using technology to meet the people.

You know, where they're at. So, how do you how do people find drive through 60. What is the website? It's, w w w dot drive through 60.com. Excellent. And 360 is the numerical 360. Right.

Yeah. Yeah. Okay. All right. Wonderful. And so thanks for thanks for being on it. It's been a wonderful conversation. Certainly, really stoked and really happy to see some, people doing the things that you're doing and creating technology for, for good.

So I'm so happy to have you on. Well, I appreciate you, chair. And and and for extending me an invitation. And I appreciate the kind of work that you're doing.

Because. Thank you. You have, you have such a, a good reputation. And and you see it from both sides. You, you understand the clinical side and, and it's it's a pleasure to have been with, you know, our village.

So thank you so much. Appreciate everyone for listening. Have a good day.